

Testimony before the Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement
H.B. 6403 AN ACT REQUIRING LEGISLATIVE APPROVAL FOR THE MERGER OR CLOSING
OF INSTITUTIONS WITHIN THE CONNECTICUT STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES.

Submitted by Seth Freeman, Professor of Computer Information Systems
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Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement committee,

My name is Seth Freeman and I am a Professor of Computer Information Systems at Capital Community College. Thank you for this opportunity to address you today.

H.B. 6403 requires legislative approval for the merger or closing of institutions within the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities. I request the committee approve this bill. Recommended substitute language for this bill is included in my written testimony.

As a faculty member at Capital, I am deeply saddened by how Capital Community College is being destroyed by this consolidation. When this consolidation is over, there may be a building at 950 Main St. in Hartford that has students and college employees, but it will not be Capital. It will be the Capital or Hartford campus of the Connecticut State Community College. There will be no decisions of importance made at the campus. Every employee who works at the Hartford campus will simply teach the curriculum and follow the orders from the managers at the One College.

The same, of course, will be said about Asnuntuck, Gateway, Housatonic, Manchester, Middlesex, Naugatuck Valley, Norwalk, Northwestern, Quinebaug Valley, Three Rivers, and Tunxis.

My despair aside, I want to share plainly my beliefs about this consolidation. I believe that the Board of Regents (BOR) and CSCU Leadership are misleading you. I believe they are misleading the public. I believe they have a long-term plan to disinvest in our community colleges. And I believe the CT legislature (you) need to step in and stop them.

I believe this consolidation has been a series of lies from the beginning.

Originally, the public was told that our twelve community colleges would retain their "unique identities". The public was told that this consolidation will save money, without decreasing the faculty and staff at the campus levels.

Unlike what was sold to us, this consolidation in no way allows each community college to retain its identity. Rather, the consolidation is forcing all of us to teach the same

curriculum and forcing all of us to adopt the same policies. The consolidation is stripping away all decision-making from the college level. Every single decision of import happens at the system level. Our College CEOs can no longer make hiring decisions. Our College CEOs can no longer even close the college campus due to a snow day.

The second lie is that this consolidation will save money without a decrease of faculty and staff at the campus level. Through this consolidation to-date, the CSCU system has spent millions of dollars on Regional managers and One College managers. Just look at the organizational chart that the CSCU system is building. You will see a massive, wasteful, bloated, orgy of administration being built out of thin air. While administrative savings may have been possible, this structure being built will clearly not realize any.

The fact is, however, there will be savings due to this consolidation. The savings will occur on the backs of faculty and staff at our colleges. There will be savings due to the attrition of faculty and staff who retire with their positions going unfilled. There will be significant savings due to future programmatic cuts and mergers at our colleges.

If this committee thinks that after the Board of Regents invests millions of dollars into this massive regional and central administration there will be NOT be savings due to cuts to faculty and staff at the campus level, then you are choosing to allow yourselves to be deceived.

There is also sadly another very simple fact about this consolidation that the BOR and CSCU leadership refuse to acknowledge.

The primary purpose of consolidation is to make it easier for the BOR to close programs at our college campuses. As long as we are twelve independently accredited colleges, it is difficult for the BOR to shut down our programs. Once we are consolidated, it is easier to shut down or merge our programs. Once we are consolidated, it is easier to shut down and close a college campus.

I know I speak for many of my colleagues at Capital Community College, when I say that I personally refuse to be lied to by the Board of Regents and CSCU Leadership. I personally care too much about Capital and have invested too much of my life at Capital, to accept the propaganda and fairy tales spun by CSCU administrators.

I hope this committee will share that sentiment.

On behalf of all of us invested in preserving our community colleges, we need the legislators hold the BOR and CSCU leadership accountable and stop the destruction of our community colleges.

I implore you adopt H.B. 6403 with the substitute language below.

HB 6403 Recommended Substitute Language

I have two recommends to the merger bill. The proposed bill states that if the legislature does not act within one year, a proposed merger or closure be deemed approved. I recommend changing that to not approved. Further, I recommend adding the clause, "that the BOR shall not seek regional accreditation for a merger that has not been approved by the general assembly."